

SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBMIT NO. 5  
DATE 3-30-07  
HJ 31

**Testimony on HJ 31  
for Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee  
March 30, 2007  
By Ron Olfert**

By voting YES on this bill you will be opposing the NREPA/RPA  
(Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act).

What is the NREPA, what does it do, and why is it dangerous?

The NREPA is a proposed action in Congress with a long history. It was written by the Alliance for the Wild Rockies. First introduced in 1992, it has been re-introduced every Congress since:

1992 HR 5944	4 co-sponsors
1993 HR2683	63 co-sponsors
1995 HR5944	4 co-sponsors
1997 HR852	72 co-sponsors
1999 HR1425	31 co-sponsors
2001 HR488	110 co-sponsors
2003 HR1105	185 co-sponsors
2005 HR1204	187 co-sponsors
2007 ?	Promised to be re-introduced, by Michael

Garrity, Executive Director of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies  
(*"Wildest Bill on the Hill Coming Soon"*, article, Mountain Press  
Publishing Co., Feb. 2, 2007)

The NREPA vastly expands wilderness to include all National Forests, designates millions of acres of Biological Connecting Corridors, Wild & Scenic Rivers, Wilderness Study Areas among others.

Your vote on HJ31 should not be a partisan action. Democrats, Republicans and Independents all own land, much of it bordering or near National Forest.

The NREPA is a "takings" Act. Property will be taken without consideration for party affiliation. If you want your constituents to know that you acted to protect their property, then you will vote YES on HJ31. Remember, if you vote no, they will find out and hold you responsible for giving away their property.

**Why is the NREPA a takings act?**

- (1) It takes, that is eliminates grazing rights
- (2) It takes, that is eliminates water rights
- (3) It takes, that is reduces property values.

**HR1204 FINDINGS (15) "This Act does not affect lands that are in private ownership."** This is a false statement in the Act.

**Included land:** Looking at published maps by the authors of the NREPA, you can see large amounts of private land within the areas colored in as Biological Connecting Corridors.

**Adjacent land:** It has in fact been proven through the implementation of CARA that Federal control of land does negatively impact adjacent private property.

**Property Values:**

The NREPA provides for purchase of adjacent private land from "willing sellers"

- (1) Property adjacent to wilderness: Property values drop because of the risk of the landowner doing something that may "harm" the adjacent highly restricted federal land. There have been instances in the past in which federal agencies have penalized landowners for performing some activity which adversely affected the federal land.

(2) Willing sellers become so because they can no longer operate any profitable business from their land. Therefore the land is easily acquired under the NREPA at drastically reduced prices.

(3) If water and grazing rights associated with a piece of land are reduced there is a loss of value of the land itself because those rights are tied to the land.

**There is an alternative to the extremism of the NREPA:**

For example a bill introduced in the current Congress, S.802 known as the Owyhee Initiative is an act that would both designate some wilderness and also protect water and grazing rights. This bill was the result of a collaborative effort of an unbiased review board between local government, federal agencies, environmental groups, recreation interests, farmers, ranchers, unlike the NREPA which is a one-sided special-interest favoring Act.

**What have the historical effects been from the type of wilderness expansion proposed in the NREPA?**

In Catron County, New Mexico the propaganda prior to establishment of wilderness was the same as that in the NREPA: booming tourist trade from all the wilderness hiking, etc.

The actual results have been

(1) no hunter bringing any dollars into Catron County...a complete loss of business, except for a very minor increase in the breakfast trade in local cafes.

**Who will implement and monitor the NREPA?**

In Title VI of the last version (HR1204) a panel is defined which will implement, monitor and report on the progress of the NREPA. This panel will be dominated, that is controlled by, the Society of Conservation Biology (SCB).

**Who is the SCB?** The SCB was founded by Reed Noss and Michael Soule.

**Reed Noss** and **Michael Soule** are chief scientific advisors for The Wildlands Project. ([www.twp.org/cms/page1125.cfm](http://www.twp.org/cms/page1125.cfm))

**Michael Soule** is a Director of the Wildlands Project ([www.twp.org/cms/page1124.cfm](http://www.twp.org/cms/page1124.cfm))

Here are some quotes which indicate their philosophy about the re-wilding of America.

Rewilding is "the scientific argument for restoring big wilderness based on the regulatory roles of large predators," according to **Soule** and **Reed Noss** in their landmark 1998 *Wild Earth* article "Rewilding and Biodiversity."

"(B)ut this is only true in the first stages of a wilderness recovery project in regions now dominated by human activity," **Noss** thinks. In the end, the cores and corridors expand so that instead of there being islands of wilderness and natural areas connected by wide pathways, there would be small islands of developed land. These small "islands" would be the only land where human activity is allowed, surrounded by a vast, roadless matrix of uninhabited wilderness.

Reed Noss in an interview this year said he agrees wholeheartedly with **Dave Foreman**, founder of EarthFirst! and co-founder of The Wildlands Project

Here's what Dave Foreman says:

"We must make this an insecure and inhospitable place for capitalists and their projects . . . We must reclaim the roads and plowed land, halt dam construction, tear down existing dams, free shackled rivers

and return to wilderness millions of tens of millions of acres of presently settled land." - **David Foreman**, Earth First!

"We advocate biodiversity for biodiversity's sake. It may take our extinction to set things straight." -**David Foreman**, founder of Earth First!, past director of the Sierra Club and co-founder of the Wildlands Project

"The collective needs of non-human species must take precedence over the needs and desires of humans." -**Dr. Reed F. Noss**, co-founder of the Wildlands Project

Biologists around the continent question whether there is really any science to support the Wildlands Project.

Richard Hobbs, author of "The Role of Corridors in Conservation: Solution or Bandwagon?" strongly implies the theory that 'natural corridors' enhances the free movement of species between reserves is on shaky ground. This concept, "along with other principles of reserve design, have been quoted in policy documents and textbooks, despite being supported by few empirical data at the time, and being subject to considerable debate since."

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